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SECRETARY McNAMARA

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

At this point the Group proceeded to Secretary McNamara's office where he was asked a number of questions in an attempt to determine what the picture was as he saw it at his level of decision.

QUESTION: What was the estimate of the probability of success of Zapata?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: This should be answered in the time context of the point of no return. Actually the chances of success changed as the days went by as the plan was modified. Initially there was a smaller force, about 800 personnel. Finally there were somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,200. This increase in the strength of the invasion force, of course, increased the chances of success. The increased logistic support also tended to increase the chances of success. On the other hand, the reduced air support, the new landing area, and the reduced sea cover all tended to reduce the chances of success. However, the over-all balance indicated a marginal probability of success. It seemed desirable to go ahead for three reasons: (1) If we didn't proceed we would have to bring the invasion force back to the United States. It seemed that the general conclusion that would result from this would be the idea that the United States was unwilling to help others fight against Communism. (2) A feeling that never again would we have a chance to overthrow Castro without utilizing Americans. (3) The failure of the CEP to succeed in their operation as a unified force would not preclude the force from breaking up and continuing guerrilla operations, in which case the operation would not be viewed by the rest of the world as a total defeat.

STATEMENT: One side we are interested in exploring is the side presented by Mr. Mann.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Tom Mann endorsed the plan before the point of no return.

[REDACTED]

STATEMENT: Our papers indicate that on the 18th of February Mr. Bundy reported to the President that there were two points of view, Mr. Bissell's and Mr. Mann's. Was Mr. Mann the one who insisted on nonattribution?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The desirability of nonattribution was a general view, almost to be met prior to approval. However, this can't be charged to Tom Mann.

QUESTION: Was the question of guerrilla operations in the Zapata area considered?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Yes. However, this was considered to be unlikely because the CEF was believed to be able to control the access routes into the beachhead. If control of the access routes was lost, however, it was believed it would be easier for the invaders to get through the swamps as individuals than it would be for Castro's units. Finally, it was believed that if Castro broke through the force could be evacuated by sea.

QUESTION: Was it a major factor that this force could get to the mountains?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Yes, it was certainly in the President's mind. It was always considered that the force could be evacuated or go through the swamp into the mountains, in which case the Press wouldn't be able to look upon the operation as a total failure.

QUESTION: What was the feeling with regard to the possibility of popular uprisings?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: It was understood that there was a substantial possibility of uprisings, possibly on the order of four or five out of ten. This led to the belief that the whole operation was marginal. Uprisings in a police state weren't expected to occur fast enough to support the landings.

QUESTION: What was expected to happen if the landing force effected a successful lodgment but there was no uprising?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: They would be split up into a guerrilla force and moved into the Escambrays.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the position of the JCS as to Zapata? Was it appreciated that they favored Trinidad over Zapata?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The JCS had reviewed the plan in early January and while they considered it marginal they still believed it had sufficient chance of success to warrant its implementation. After all the modifications to the original plan were made they still believed the chances of success were marginal, but they still wanted to give it a try. There was one important modification that the Chiefs never knew about and one about which they all felt strongly. This was the decision to cancel some of the D-Day air strikes. This decision was made at the only meeting at which neither I nor the Chiefs participated. It was my understanding that both the CIA and the Chiefs preferred Zapata to Trinidad. For while Trinidad offered the advantage of close proximity to the Excamay or guerrilla territory, Zapata offered an air strip and was likely to be less well protected by Castro, thereby raising the chances of success for the initial landing.

QUESTION: Was it understood that control of the air was essential to the success of the landing?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: It was understood that without control of the air the chances of success would be considerably decreased. The understanding of Castro's air force was not adequate, particularly in terms of the numbers and types of aircraft. Furthermore, it was assumed that a large number of his aircraft would be incapacitated. This appears to have been a major error. However, to get back to the question of control of the air, it was certainly understood that it was very important.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: It doesn't appear that we would have achieved complete control of the air even if we had made the dawn air attack.

STATEMENT: There were some reports that we knocked out approximately two-thirds of Castro's combat aircraft.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: If we knocked out two-thirds of Castro's aircraft they had a greater capability than they were expected to have.

QUESTION: What was the understanding as to the ability of the landing force to pass to a guerrilla status in an emergency?

[REDACTED]

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Quite clear that they could function in a guerrilla status.

MR. DULLES: Actually this never had a chance to be tested.

QUESTION: What degree of nonattribution was sought and why?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The highest possible degree because the Latin-American countries had indicated they would not support this operation.

QUESTION: Was there any doubt that, globally speaking, this operation would be attributed to the United States?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: We felt it would to a degree, but wanted to reduce this to a minimum.

QUESTION: Were the implications of the conflict between operational requirements for success and the need for non-attribution clearly understood?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Not really. As the plan progressed there was a definite trend to reduce the possibilities of attribution. This trend took the shape of a curve and finally the plan was compromised in order to reduce the chances of attribution.

QUESTION: Do you believe that the CIA became advocates of the plan?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: It was not a CIA debacle. It was a Government debacle. There wasn't any person in the room that didn't approve the plan. Bissell in no sense was selling the operation. [REDACTED] was eloquent in advocating the plan. However, his presentations were so onesided that he made little influence on my judgment.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: This was a marginal operation. It was recognized that if one ship was lost we were in trouble. The feeling never developed, however, that CIA was selling this operation.

ADMIRAL BURKE: I had misgivings about the plan, but none that were crucial.

[REDACTED]

SECRETARY McNAMARA: That's right, it was a gradual erosion of the plan, but not to the extent that it seemed desirable to call off the operation.

QUESTION: You mentioned the requirement for the clarification of responsibilities here in Washington.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: CIA should not run such large operations. They simply don't have the facilities. We could have used our facilities on a nonattributable basis. It would have been better if we could have handled the operation because we could have planned it on a much larger scale. We could have assured command control. A military operation should never be conducted except under a military man.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: We should systematize the decision making process.

QUESTION: How would you do this on a systematic basis?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I wasn't thinking so much in terms of this as the fact that I wouldn't allow any decisions to be made or actions taken except on the basis of written documents.

QUESTION: Do you believe the absence of written documents was a consequence of security considerations?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Yes.

QUESTION: Going back to the Cuban operation, accepting for the moment that the military should have run the operation, when should they have taken control?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I am not qualified to answer that as I don't know enough about the CIA structure.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Another alternative that might be desirable in the case of future Cubas is that the CIA, for example, would conceive the need for certain actions. CIA should then lay out their basic plan and when they reach the point where they feel that they should train and equip troops, the JCS should be brought in to make an evaluation. This should be done even before the President makes his decision. Then at the point when the operation

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

is approved the military commander should take over so he can shape the whole operation. In the case of Cuba, for example, at the point where the Special Force instructors were requested the DOD should have come in.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: There is one point that should be emphasized, that is, that all decisions and actions should be written. This would engender responsibility.

QUESTION: How big should a force be before becoming a DOD responsibility?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: To answer that question you need a detailed organization study. I believe that someone should make a study and come up with a recommendation.

[REDACTED]

GENERAL WHEELER

At this point the Group returned to General Taylor's office and General Wheeler appeared before the Group.

QUESTION: As the Director of the Joint Staff, how did this operation look to you?

ANSWER: When we got into this in January I put General Gray to work as our representative. Now an interesting aspect was that we attempted to make an evaluation of the plan as it existed at the time we became aware of it and I had J-2 and J-3 make an independent survey to find the optimum landing beach in Cuba, and they came up with Trinidad. Then General Gray, working with a group of officers from all the J Staffs, evaluated the plan, and this evaluation was concluded with the statement that the plan had a fair chance. It was pointed out, however, that our conclusions were based only on hearsay and so we recommended that a team of officers go down to the training area and make an evaluation there. When they returned they wrote their evaluation which indicated several weaknesses, particularly in logistics. As a consequence, we sent [REDACTED] down to help them with their amphibious logistic problems. Thereafter, progressively as the time approached for the implementation of the plan, the plan as originally envisioned was walked away from, particularly the air support aspects. For example, the air strikes were desired on D-Day for maximum effect. The next thing that was bothersome was that we couldn't land at Trinidad as we had to find an airstrip from which the B-26s could claim to be operating. Then came the evaluation of the ZAPATA Plan. If I remember correctly, there were three alternatives to Trinidad that were looked at, and ZAPATA was the least objectionable. I can recall that when he looked at the ZAPATA Plan General Lemnitzer asked how the force would get out of that area in the event that the operation didn't go well. It was explained that the troops would fade into the swamps and move into the mountains. I felt that this had less than a fair chance of success.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: How long did you consider the ZAPATA Plan?

ANSWER: It couldn't have been for more than 48 hours.

QUESTION: Do you think this was time enough to go into the plan adequately?

ANSWER: I believe that you could make a fairly good evaluation in that length of time, or even less. ZAPATA was only a change of the area of landing, not a change of the pattern of the landing.

QUESTION: What about the air plan? Was it really discussed by the Chiefs?

ANSWER: At every meeting there were pros and cons on how important the first air strikes would be and how important it would be to the success of the operation. I feel that the sense of the Chiefs throughout the meetings was that air support was critical to the success of the operation.

QUESTION: When the Chiefs approved the ZAPATA Plan, however, was it with the understanding that there would be pre-D-Day strikes or D-Day strikes?

ANSWER: The matter of the pre-D-Day strike came up after the ZAPATA Plan was more or less set as the plan to be implemented, if I remember correctly. The plan for the ZAPATA landing, as I recall it, still called for the D-Day strike, I think at dawn on D-Day. As I say, I could be wrong on that particular point.

QUESTION: Do you have documents that you can refer to that will establish this time?

ANSWER: Yes, General Gray, I am sure, has these documents.

STATEMENT: The Chiefs were still talking largely in terms of the original plan with the locale moved from Trinidad to ZAPATA.

RESPONSE: That would be more understandable except for the fact that you rejected some of the other alternatives you considered on the basis that they didn't have air strikes.

QUESTION: Did anybody study whether or not the guerrillas could operate in the swamp area?

[REDACTED]

ANSWER: I understand that they can, that they have been operating in there for a hundred years.

STATEMENT: This has been referred to, as General Wheeler says. However, I have seen no evidence it has been utilized in recent years.

QUESTION: Did anybody study that?

ANSWER: In that particular area we didn't make any particular study of it, no. We were told this was a guerrilla area and I was under the impression that there were even some guerrillas operating in there at this time.

QUESTION: But nobody in the Joint Staff looked into this matter at the time?

ANSWER: Our people said that this was a guerrilla area and that people could sustain themselves in there.

QUESTION: What I am trying to determine is if a study was made.

ANSWER: No, no study was made, certainly no detailed study.

STATEMENT: We inquired into this on one occasion and the people at CIA told us that a group of a hundred guerrillas were operating in this area, and there was lots of small game.

STATEMENT: Of course, a second point was that while it might have been usable as a guerrilla area at one time, this was before the time of helicopters. It would seem that some of these military experts should have been able to figure this out.

QUESTION: In talking with [REDACTED], did he point out that the primary evacuation would be by sea, but if this failed they would move into the swamps for their guerrilla operation?

ANSWER: Yes, that was discussed, sir, and it was recognized that this would be a very sticky and difficult thing to do. In the first place, it was recognized that evacuation by sea is one of the most difficult operations there is. You almost have to have support from the sea in the form of gunfire support or air cover. I thought that if these people were really pressed hard the possibility of evacuation would be much less than their going into a guerrilla operation.

[REDACTED]

STATEMENT: It would seem that the concept of falling back to the beaches should have been ruled out because it almost ruled out the possibility of guerrilla action as a practical thing.

QUESTION: With regard to the logistics of this thing, would you say that the Joint Staff checked the logistics carefully?

ANSWER: I believe that the logistic aspects were checked very carefully indeed.

QUESTION: As D-Day approached what plans were there for liaison with the CIA?

ANSWER: We set up a little war room here which ran on a 24-hour basis. We had constant liaison with CIA, we had liaison officers from the services, and I had taken people from various sections of the Joint Staff. We had a special communications system where all items from CINCLANT came directly in to General Gray. He was really the disseminator of all messages from the Department of Defense and the other agencies to CINCLANT.

QUESTION: How did you get the messages that came in over at CIA?

ANSWER: They were transmitted over here.

QUESTION: How were they transmitted?

ANSWER: We have a teletype here in J-2.

QUESTION: So you had the same messages here as they had in CIA?

ANSWER: To the best of my belief.

QUESTION: When were you and the Joint Staff aware of the ammunition shortage?

ANSWER: When we got word that the ship that was at Blue Beach was sunk we learned that a large portion of their reserve ammo was aboard, and then we saw messages from the beach area in which they particularly mentioned that they were running low on tank ammunition.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Once you found out there was an ammunition shortage did you try and get the ships back in there?

ANSWER: Yes, we did.

STATEMENT: I get the impression that a very careful evaluation was made of the Trinidad Plan and that about all that was done in regard to the ZAPATA Plan was that it was looked at with the idea that everything set forth in the Trinidad Plan would go with the exception of the adjustments that had to be made at the new beach.

RESPONSE: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Did you have liaison officers over at CIA?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: On D+1 they were going to try and make a run into the beach with ammunition. They made an emergency request for air cover. Do you recall whether it was appreciated that this was the only way that they could get that ammunition ashore was with air cover?

ANSWER: Sir, I wouldn't even put it on the basis of ammunition alone. The reports from the beach indicated that the men desperately needed air cover. I definitely knew the situation was desperate at that time, there was no question about it.

STATEMENT: Well, let's move out now and have you tell us how you think you could do this a little bit better in the future.

ANSWER: This is not an original thought. It results from discussions with General Gray and others, and we feel that to properly organize you need to start with a broad national plan prepared by all the agencies of the Government. It should start off in the broad terms of a concept and after the concept is agreed upon and approved by the President each agency should prepare its own part of the plan. We think that in this case CINCLANT should have set up a special operational task force and prepared the detailed plan for the operation. If this plan was prepared, of course, it would be passed up through channels to the President.

QUESTION: How about your other aspects of the plan - the political, the psychological and so on?

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
ANSWER: Well, actually these are the special plans that were mentioned earlier with regard to the national plan.

QUESTION: Who would be responsible for success or failure?

ANSWER: The man in charge of the special task force.

STATEMENT: What we really feel is that we lack this national U.S. plan of action. We feel that there should have been a unified task force commander to really conduct the operation. We feel that you cannot efficiently attempt to conduct operations of this sort from Washington. It is too far removed. People are too immersed in other types of activities. What it results in is that responsible officials are called upon to make rather heavy decisions with very little forewarning and in some cases without perhaps as much information as they should have.

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Natl. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/78
By JK. NARS, Date 6/23/78

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4 May 1961 - Tenth Meeting

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By JK NARS, Date 6/22/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

AT THE PENTAGON

TENTH MEETING

4 MAY 1961

PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

GENERAL GRAY

GENERAL BONESTEEL

MR. RUSK

COMMANDER MITCHELL

LT COLONEL TARWATER

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
~~ULTRA SENSITIVE~~

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

The first portion of the meeting was devoted to a consideration of some of the tentative conclusions reached at this point. After a short while it was deemed desirable to recall General Gray for further questioning.

GENERAL GRAY

QUESTION: We are impressed by the incompleteness of the JCS appraisal of the Zapata Plan. We understand that the incompleteness of the evaluation was due, in part, to the fact that it was based on a concept rather than a completed plan. Is that a fair statement?

ANSWER: Yes. To a degree the incompleteness was due to that.

QUESTION: Having at least concurred in this concept as being an adequate basis for further planning, why didn't the Joint Chiefs, at some point down the road, look at the completed plan or a plan sufficiently detailed so that they could consider some of the points that they had missed?

ANSWER: One reason the Zapata Plan was brief in comparison with the other one is because most of the factors were exactly the same. The second factor was the limitation of time. We were briefed in the morning and had to get out a paper on which we could brief the Chiefs the following morning. Furthermore, at this time this was not just a consideration of three possible alternatives. The original Trinidad Plan was still in the running. We determined that Zapata was the best of the three alternatives, but we still preferred the original Trinidad Plan.

QUESTION: But you did accept Zapata as the basis for further planning?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: At what point did the plan take enough shape that the JCS could have made a detailed evaluation?

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
ANSWER: The detailed plan was probably completed on 8 April because that's when [REDACTED] went down south. However, we didn't get that plan until the operation started.

QUESTION: General Gray, how close were you to this plan?

ANSWER: I was in on all the meetings that were held at the White House with one exception.

QUESTION: Were you talking with CIA people on this plan?

ANSWER: Yes. The first change we noticed was when the concept changed from being just at the head of the Bay, and moved south down the eastern side to the Blue Beach area.

QUESTION: How did you get that information?

ANSWER: By liaison back and forth between officers. I briefed the JCS on that change in concept at one of their meetings. The reason for this change was because a usable airfield was down on the shoulder and that was one of the requirements that had been placed on the plan.

QUESTION: Was the possibility of this force becoming a guerrilla unit considered?

ANSWER: Not formally by the Joint Chiefs, but we looked at it. It was felt that they could hold this area. However, if they didn't get popular support there was no advantage for them to sit there. For even if Castro couldn't eliminate them, other people couldn't get in to them, so they had to get out of there. It was concluded if they were going to withdraw there were three ways they could do it. One was evacuation by ship. If the decision had been made and planned for we could have withdrawn those people off the beach. The second one was that with air support they could have fought their way out. The third possibility was that part of the force would be evacuated and then later infiltrated back in as guerrillas and the other part of the force would actually remain in that whole Zapata Peninsula area and operate as guerrillas in the expanse to the west. It was always believed they could get out by sea because the CIA's sea operations had always been very successful.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Were you aware that the troops were trained and instructed that in the event they couldn't hold their lodgment they were to fall back onto the beaches for evacuation, and only if that failed would they operate as guerrilla forces?

ANSWER: No, we weren't. That wasn't in the plan and we were not present at the final briefing.

QUESTION: Did you brief the Joint Chiefs on all the parts of the plan?

ANSWER: Yes, all except the question of the air strikes.

QUESTION: What was your understanding of the air strikes?

ANSWER: There would be air strikes on D-Day. This D-2 air strike didn't come in until the last few days. The air plan consisted of nothing but D-Day strikes. Our understanding of the plan was always that the air strikes would be conducted at dawn from Puerto Cabezas.

QUESTION: Would you look back in your notes and see when you briefed the Chiefs and essentially what was in your briefing so we'll know what they heard about the plan?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

STATEMENT: There were four official papers that the Joint Chiefs considered. The first was the original Trinidad Plan. The Second was the Zapata Evaluation. Third was the evaluation of whether or not we could put a small force in the Oriente Province and they could hang on, and fourth was the evaluation of the team's trip to Guatemala. They were briefed on these official papers and at their regular meetings I brought them up to date on what was going on. At several of these meetings they were briefed on changes to the plan and they approved them.

QUESTION: Were these briefings for information or to get their decision?

ANSWER: Generally speaking, when I briefed them it was on some paper or something that they were being asked to approve.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Would you say then that the Chiefs did have all the essential elements of this plan and did consider the plan adequate?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Did you feel you had the option to the guerrilla alternative?

ANSWER: Yes, I've always thought we had the option to make that decision before the force got pressed right down to the beach.

GENERAL GRAY: As D-Day approached it seemed to me that popular support was developing and building. We did measure all the military factors we thought were necessary. However, it was very difficult to get an accurate fix on where the militia was.

QUESTION: You and the DOD did consider the logistic problem and took action to strengthen the logistic plan. Is that a fair statement?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

STATEMENT: In other words, logistically speaking, you had planned a very heavy back up to insure a successful operation.

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Would you say that you saw this plan develop, that you had adequate contact with the CIA so that your group, at least, had full knowledge of the developments and anything that looked doubtful was taken before the Joint Chiefs?

ANSWER: That's right.

QUESTION: Is it true that while the Joint Chiefs never had a presentation on the over-all Zapata Plan at one time, they were briefed on all the pieces of the plan, so they could be said to have knowledge of the entire plan?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: What concern was expressed over the fact that there were only small boats to unload the HUSTON off Red Beach?

ANSWER: I actually didn't know that detail.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Did you know that the ATLANTICO and the CARIBE had gone south a hundred or two hundred miles and actually escaped from control for a number of hours?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Do you recall when you discovered that?

ANSWER: It's in our log. As soon as we became aware of it we told CINCLANT to round them up.

STATEMENT: Our position on all of this was that we would do anything as long as it was approved, and then CIA carried the ball on getting the approval.

GENERAL TAYLOR: After listening to General Gray's testimony I now feel that the Joint Chiefs had a more complete appraisal of the plan and consequently gave a more complete approval.

GENERAL GRAY: I believe there should have been a final briefing on the over-all plan about April 12th. I wrote that into the tasks that were to be followed by the different agencies. I believe this would have permitted a more detailed evaluation of the plan and all the changes that had been made up to that point.

GENERAL GRAY: Speaking for myself, there could have been a more detailed evaluation, but I don't think it would have changed my evaluation that the plans should have gone ahead.

GENERAL BONESTEEL

At this point General Gray left and General Bonesteel appeared before the Group.

QUESTION: How can we better cope with the cold war problem?

ANSWER: It is essential that we have a cold war indications center where all the traffic of messages and intelligence from all the departments would come into a central area which is organized and staffed to keep an eye on what is happening throughout the world in order to flag situations on which it may be necessary to take action. This institution needs to be staffed by people from the State Department, the military and intelligence communities.

QUESTION: Would this group make plans?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ANSWER: It could if expanded to this. However, its primary purpose would be to call attention to situations that might require some kind of action.

QUESTION: Isn't this the State Department's area of responsibility?

ANSWER: Possibly, but it wouldn't work as well under the State Department as it would if the various agency representatives worked as coequals.

STATEMENT: The reason this sort of center is necessary is because of schizophrenia. The DOD probably believes that power is the final criteria of Communist success, whereas in the State Department there are probably only a half dozen people that understand the requirements for power. Furthermore, you can't get the State Department to plan on the use of power in any future operations. Actually you have no one place to get the proper interagency coordination on cold war matters.

QUESTION: The NSC was organized for this purpose, wasn't it?

ANSWER: Yes, sir. The NSC is a mechanism for doing this. However, it has no staff except stenographic.

QUESTION: Are you suggesting that if the NSC was reorganized they could do this?

ANSWER: No, I would in fact revise the NSC.

QUESTION: Who would spark off the actions that needed to be taken throughout the world?

ANSWER: The cold war indications center.

QUESTION: Where would be the central place that the plan would be developed?

ANSWER: Under NSC auspices.

SECRETARY RUSK

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

At this point the Study Group reconvened in Secretary Rusk's office in the State Department. Present were:

GENERAL TAYLOR

SECRETARY RUSK

MR. KENNEDY

COMMANDER MITCHELL

MR. DULLES

LT COLONEL TARWATER

After a few introductory remarks Secretary Rusk was asked his estimate of the probability of success of the Zapata Plan.

SECRETARY RUSK: It was in the neighborhood of fifty per cent. It appeared the landing might be followed by further uprisings. If this failed the force could become guerrillas.

MR. DULLES: I think we all looked upon this as a pretty risky operation.

SECRETARY RUSK: The risks of the operation were accepted, however, because the importance of success was fully appreciated. Time was running out. It was the last chance in some time to have this job done by Cubans. Otherwise we might have to do this with American personnel and this would be less desirable. Castro's police power was increasing and he was also receiving a large inflow of Soviet arms. Further, it should be pointed out that when we talked about the possibility of failure we talked about far more disastrous results than actually occurred. For example, we had discussed the possibility of such things as being ousted from the OAS or censure by the UN, and lively and adverse reaction by our allies in Europe. The results that developed were not as serious as those that we had considered.

QUESTION: What was the feeling of the likelihood of a popular uprising following the landing?

SECRETARY RUSK: There was a very considerable likelihood of popular uprisings.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: How essential was such an uprising regarded for the success of the operation?

SECRETARY RUSK: It was believed that the uprising was utterly essential to success in terms of ousting Castro. At one point we discussed the possibility of putting these men in as guerrillas. However, this concept was rejected on the basis of the fact that it would not spark an uprising.

QUESTION: What was your understanding of the requirements for sufficient shock to spark uprisings?

SECRETARY RUSK: The impression existed that 1,200 highly trained men expected to get ashore and run into some militia units and beat the hell out of them. This would be the kind of a bloody nose that would get things moving. The feeling was that there would be no fighting on the beach. It seemed that this area was virtually empty. There was a good chance the invasion force could get well ashore without being discovered.

QUESTION: What was expected to happen if the landing force effected a successful lodgment but there was no uprising?

SECRETARY RUSK: In that case they would commence guerrilla operations, move into the swamps and then into the hills. This swamp area was stated to be the home of guerrillas.

QUESTION: Was the point made that this area had not been used for guerrilla operations in this century?

SECRETARY RUSK: I don't recall.

QUESTION: Was the possibility of a sea evacuation of the force considered?

SECRETARY RUSK: I don't recall. At least, it didn't make an impression on me. Let me point out that there was a minimum of papers.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the position of the JCS as to Zapata? Was it appreciated that they favored Trinidad over Zapata?

[REDACTED]

SECRETARY RUSK: They approved the Trinidad Plan. Trinidad involved a larger scale, more spectacular operation. It didn't offer the immediate possibility of an airstrip. It was felt that Zapata had considerably more political advantages and that the JCS approved Zapata.

STATEMENT: The JCS commented that Zapata was the best of the three alternatives they considered, but that they still favored the original Trinidad Plan.

SECRETARY RUSK: They didn't put their view in writing and that didn't come through. There was a strong impression that they favored the plan. At one meeting the President went around the room and asked everyone personally their opinion and I believe that I was the only one that didn't approve.

QUESTION: Was it understood that control of the air was considered essential to the success of the landing?

SECRETARY RUSK: Yes, it was understood that it was essential to the success of the landing, but there was an inadequate appreciation of the enemy's capability in the air. Furthermore, neither the President nor I was clear that there was a D-2 air strike. We did have it in our minds that there would be a D-Day air strike. Following the D-2 air strike there was considerable confusion. It wasn't realized that there was to be more than one air strike in the Havana area. The President was called on this matter and he didn't think there should be second strikes in the area unless there were overriding considerations. We talked about the relative importance of the air strikes with Mr. Bissell and General Cabell at the time. However, they indicated that the air strikes would be important, but not critical. I offered to let them call the President, but they indicated they didn't think the matter was that important. They said that they preferred not to call the President.

QUESTION: Did you attempt to advise the President as to the importance of the air strikes?

SECRETARY RUSK: I had talked to him and he had stated that if there weren't overriding considerations the second strikes shouldn't

[REDACTED]

be made. Since Mr. Bissell and General Cabell didn't want to talk to the President on the matter, I felt there were no overriding considerations to advise him of. I didn't think they believed the dawn air strikes were too important. I believe that Castro turned out to have more operational air strength than we figured.

MR. DULLES: I don't believe they had any more. However, they turned out to be more efficient.

QUESTION: Do you recall why the question of air strikes was withheld until Sunday evening?

SECRETARY RUSK: As far as I was concerned, I was caught by surprise with the first air strikes. I was trying to advise Adlai Stevenson at the UN on what was happening and suddenly found out there were additional air strikes coming up. We didn't want him to have to lie to the UN.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the ability of the landing force to pass to a guerrilla status in an emergency?

SECRETARY RUSK: The impression was that the ability of this force to pass to guerrilla activities presented no difficulty. At the beginning of the second day the President and I discussed the question of whether it was time to move the force out as guerrillas. However, it appears there was a delay in turning to this because they didn't have this action in mind.

GENERAL TAYLOR: They were told to fall back to the beaches so that they could be evacuated from the sea.

SECRETARY RUSK: Guerrilla actions were regarded as far more feasible than they turned out to be. I do regret, however, that consideration was not given to another alternative. I suggested earlier that they land in the eastern portion of Cuba and then get a position with Guantanamo behind them. However, our military friends didn't want to spoil the virginity of Guantanamo.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the ammunition situation at the end of April 18? Was the importance of air cover for the returning ammunition ships understood?

[REDACTED]

SECRETARY RUSK: It was apparent that it was critical. The requirement for air cover wasn't as apparent as for air drops and getting the ships back in there, particularly in regard to getting them some tank ammunition.

QUESTION: Was it known at your level that two of the ammunition ships had taken off from the beach area and kept going south?

SECRETARY RUSK: No.

QUESTION: What degree of nonattribution was sought and why? Were the operational disadvantages arising from some of the restrictions imposed by the efforts to achieve nonattribution clearly presented and understood?

SECRETARY RUSK: We were hoping for the maximum. In retrospect, however, this looks a little naive. The considerations involved in this were that if you have success all the problems solve themselves. However, if you have failure it's very nice if the United States is not involved.

STATEMENT: Of course, there are degrees of nonattribution. The most costly restriction was the requirement not to have the air strikes even by Cubans *which were not out of Cuba.* *MDL*

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: To what extent did the CIA operations representatives have to "sell" the operation to the other agencies of government?

SECRETARY RUSK: You have to draw a distinction between the policy side and the operational side. The policy side we were willing to look at, if it was policy. On the operational side, we were oversold on the operational aspects.

QUESTION: What do you mean by oversold on the operational aspects?

SECRETARY RUSK: It was presented in too optimistic terms.

QUESTION: Do you have any remarks on the integrated planning and coordination?

SECRETARY RUSK: This is very important. These covert matters are handled on such a restricted basis that the resources of the departments are not brought to bear.

SECRETARY RUSK: When you go beyond a few people in an operation of this sort it shouldn't be handled by the CIA.

QUESTION: What didn't we do that we should have?

SECRETARY RUSK: Before the President made his decision, CIA and Defense should have spelled out the entire CIA plan in one presentation. While the President had all the factors in his mind, I think this would have helped.

SECRETARY RUSK: Furthermore, we overemphasized some of the factors. For example, the question of what to do with this 1,200-man force. This question played too large a role because we certainly should have been able to handle these 1,200 men.

SECRETARY RUSK: If you are not prepared to go all the way you shouldn't put 1,200 men ashore.

SECRETARY RUSK: When you get to the final decision stage the room should be cleared of all but those that have formal constitutional responsibility. People looking down the cannon's mouth should be in a solemn position and make a solemn decision without having large numbers of people in the room.

STATEMENT: Mr. McNamara stressed the desirability of having written papers and decisions.

[REDACTED]

SECRETARY RUSK: That would have been helpful. However, it would have meant 50 or 60 pieces of paper around this town.

SECRETARY RUSK: One concluding remark. There was no one involved that didn't recognize this was a risky business and that failure would be costly. However, we overestimated the international effects of failure, and underestimated the effects of failure on this town.

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By JK NARS, Date 6/23/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

AT THE PENTAGON

ELEVENTH MEETING

5 MAY 1961

PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

MR. BERLE

COMMANDER MITCHELL

LT COLONEL TARWATER

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ULTRA SENSITIVE

QUESTION: Was it understood that control of the air was considered as essential to the success of the landing?

MR. BERLE: Yes. The plan contemplated that Castro's air would be reduced to the minimum.

QUESTION: And that it was necessary to a successful landing to reduce Castro's air to the vanishing point?

MR. BERLE: The understanding was that it would be reduced to minimal proportions.

QUESTION: What were the circumstances surrounding the cancellation of the D-Day air strike?

MR. BERLE: As the plan emerged, it was considered to be an operation by Cubans to fire a shot for freedom in their own country. The less participation of American force the better. The air strikes would be assumed to be American air strikes, therefore the air strikes would not receive any favor from State. The hope was, therefore, that by action by the Cubans themselves from the captured air strip, they could take care of the Cuban aviation in time to clear the thing up. The circumstances surrounding the cancellation of the air strikes, I don't know.

QUESTION: What was the understanding as to the ability of the landing force to pass to a guerrilla status in an emergency?

MR. BERLE: The feeling was that they would make their way in the swamps for a period of time and then most likely get to the Escambray. Our understanding was that the probability of this was very considerable.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the ammunition situation at the end of 18 April? Was the importance of air cover for the returning ammunition ships understood?

MR. BERLE: I can't answer that question.

QUESTION: What was the degree of non-attribution sought?

MR. BERLE: Non-attribution was not altogether necessary. The conventions protecting against intervention did not apply because the Communists had intruded in this hemisphere, and second because Castro's government was an openly constituted totalitarian government which is clearly outside the provisions of

[REDACTED]

the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, that is. They attacked the Organization of American States, announced they would not be bound by the rules of the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, and announced they were going to export the revolution. They had actually invaded two or three other states, and were in no position to claim the protections of the international system. This is still true. As far as non-attribution is concerned, we had assisted Cubans that wished to fight for freedom in their own country. As a matter of fact, it seemed that it was the last clear chance that Cubans would have to fight for freedom in their own country. The danger then, was not of non-attribution but of failure. Clearly it must not be an American invasion. The attribution of assistance to the Cubans by the United States under all circumstances did not seem too serious.

STATEMENT: From the other testimony, it appears that the actual policy that was followed was much tougher than that.

MR. BERLE: Yes, this was probably true.

QUESTION: To what extent did the CIA operations representatives have to sell the operation to the other agencies of the government? Did it seem that they had become so motivated in favor of implementation of this plan that they were willing to accept restrictions that might have been dangerous? Even to accept restrictions of an operational nature rather than to run the risk of a cancellation. Did you think anything like this was in the atmosphere?

MR. BERLE: No. It would not be fair to say that.

QUESTION: Do you have anything to say about the plan in a general nature?

MR. BERLE: Success in this kind of an operation would have been the greatest single thing we could have done to avoid any Cold War threat of major proportions from the countries to the south. Some sort of a clash was bound to come, and it was probably better if it came sooner with one country, rather than later with two or three countries.

STATEMENT: I believe that our feeling is once the decision is made to run an operation such as this that the success should have gained the edge over non-attribution.

([REDACTED])

[REDACTED]

MR. BERLE: I think so too.

QUESTION: Do you feel that the inter-department planning and coordination could be better effected in a similar operation?

MR. BERLE: Yes. The determination of policy should not be determined in group meetings. Policy should be determined by the President and two or three men. The difficulty with the meeting technique is that no one man states everything that is in his mind. Further, it seems to me that probably a somewhat better list of priority premises could be made up. The cardinal premise should be that once an undertaking is underway, it should be followed through until success, no matter what is committed. Then you should have lesser premises. As to coordination, there was no great lack. It was about as good as it could be.

STATEMENT: One problem would appear to be that we have no focal point outside of the President.

MR. BERLE: I believe we need a Chief of Staff of the Cold War. I wrote this out once in a report to President Kennedy before his inauguration.

QUESTION: Could a copy of this paper be made available to this group?

MR. BERLE: It's the President's personal report.

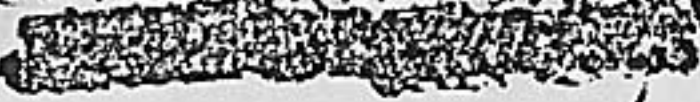
MR. KENNEDY: No problem.

MR. BERLE: I also made a talk at the Air University on this same subject. It's in New York, but I'll write for a copy for you.

QUESTION: Where would this Chief of Staff of the Cold War be established?

MR. BERLE: The theory was that we should have a Cold War Chief of Staff and you would have to have certain theatre commands under him. He would be subject to a political committee, composed of the President, the Secretary of State, possibly the Secretary of Treasury, and the Secretary of Defense. But primarily the predominate consideration should be political. The handling of the funds would have to be worked out in some way so that the budget wouldn't have to be examined as terribly painfully as the military budgets are at the present time.

QUESTION: Would you recommend we contact Mr. Mann?


MR. BERLE: His record is longer than mine. However, I don't think it would differ from what I have said. If he was in Washington, I think you should call him. However, he is in Mexico, and I would question the desirability of bringing him back.

QUESTION: What has the reaction been in Latin America with regard to this operation?

MR. BERLE: They're slowly coming our way.

QUESTION: It hasn't been very harmful?

MR. BERLE: No. It's led to the breakup of a lot of United Fronts throughout the Latin American countries, and the demonstrations against us have been by the Communist hardcore. But slowly the people are realizing that they have to choose between the Communist intrusion and the United States, and it seems to be developing favorably for us.

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6 May 1961 - Conversation

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By JK NARS, Date 6/22/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

CONVERSATION BETWEEN GENERAL TAYLOR AND [REDACTED]

AT THE PENTAGON

6 MAY 1961

PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

[REDACTED]
LT COLONEL TARWATER

[REDACTED]

ULTRA SENSITIVE

~~ULTRA SENSITIVE~~

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Would you explain how the air operation was organized.

As I understand it, there were two organizations - one for planning and one for execution.

ANSWER: That's right.

QUESTION: Were you the actual air commander?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: When did the pre-D-Day strikes come into the picture?

ANSWER: I'm not sure.

STATEMENT: Will you ask [REDACTED] to come over on Monday and set forth the facts relating to the pre-D-Day air strikes.

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What was the turn-around time for your aircraft?

ANSWER: The longest time was three hours. A normal combat loading took approximately an hour.

QUESTION: How long could you remain over the target?

ANSWER: Thirty minutes to an hour.

QUESTION: What was your capability for providing air cover to the beach?

ANSWER: We could keep someone over there all the time. On D-Day we had a capability for launching [REDACTED] sorties. If we hadn't lost some of our air crews to enemy air action, we'd have been able to maintain this indefinitely.

QUESTION: That would have been a major effort?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: How many strikes were conducted against the air fields?

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

~~ULTRA SENSITIVE~~

ANSWER: The D-2 air strikes of eight B-26s against three airfields. On the nights of 17 and 18 April three B-26s were scheduled against San Antonio de las Banos. Two of these aborted, one arrived over the target, but due to haze and a blackout he was unable to identify his target. In the early morning hours of 18 April three more aircraft were dispatched against San Antonio de las Banos. One aborted on take-off, two aircraft arrived over target, but due to scud and haze in the area, they couldn't locate the target.

STATEMENT: After the D-2 air strikes, we knew that we hadn't destroyed all the aircraft. Consequently, we requested permission to launch air strikes against the remaining targets on D-1.

QUESTION: How was the request for the D-1 air strike handled?

ANSWER: It was not approved by Washington.

QUESTION: When were you denied permission to use napalm?

ANSWER: We only had standing authority to use napalm against a tank farm. We had to request authority on all other targets.

QUESTION: When did the pilot fatigue show up?

ANSWER: 171030Z.

QUESTION: Was this really fatigue?

ANSWER: Yes. In 14 out 17 cases; the other three pilots just didn't have it.

QUESTION: How many B-26 pilots did you have?

ANSWER: Seventeen Cuban and eight American. Twenty-five all together.

QUESTION: What do you think about the adequacy of the number of pilots?

ANSWER: It was enough.

QUESTION: Did you have enough pilots to fly over the beach with two aircraft at all times?

ANSWER: Yes. There was a 4,100 foot strip in the beachhead area and we had crews qualified to operate from this strip.

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~~ULTRASENSITIVE~~

QUESTION: If the invasion had been successful enough to keep the artillery off, you would have been successful?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What was your understanding on the use of contract pilots?

ANSWER: We didn't have blanket authority to use them, but we did have the authority to hire and train them and put them on a standby status. Later the use of contract pilots, in the beachhead area only, was approved by Washington.

QUESTION: Who handled your messages in Washington?

ANSWER: [REDACTED]

QUESTION: Were you surprised at the effectiveness of the T-33s?

ANSWER: I've flown T-33s - they're a good airplane. We weren't surprised at their capabilities once they were airborne.

QUESTION: How would you summarize your feelings with regard to the operation and the lessons to be learned?

ANSWER: Policy decisions above the agency denied us the right to go ahead as scheduled and planned.

QUESTION: Was there some confusion as to the time the Navy air CAP was to be provided?

ANSWER: There was no confusion of the time. I received a message that Navy air CAP would be provided.

QUESTION: Would you provide us with a copy of the message?

ANSWER: Yes.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ANSWER: The detailed plan was probably completed on 8 April because that's when [REDACTED] went down south. However, we didn't get that plan until the operation started.

QUESTION: General Gray, how close were you to this plan?

ANSWER: I was in on all the meetings that were held at the White House with one exception.

QUESTION: Were you talking with CIA people on this plan?

ANSWER: Yes. The first change we noticed was when the concept changed from being just at the head of the Bay, and moved south down the eastern side to the Blue Beach area.

QUESTION: How did you get that information?

ANSWER: By liaison back and forth between officers. I briefed the JCS on that change in concept at one of their meetings. The reason for this change was because a usable airfield was down on the shoulder and that was one of the requirements that had been placed on the plan.

QUESTION: Was the possibility of this force becoming a guerrilla unit considered?

ANSWER: Not formally by the Joint Chiefs, but we looked at it. It was felt that they could hold this area. However, if they didn't get popular support there was no advantage for them to sit there. For even if Castro couldn't eliminate them, other people couldn't get in to them, so they had to get out of there. It was concluded if they were going to withdraw there were three ways they could do it. One was evacuation by ship. If the decision had been made and planned for we could have withdrawn those people off the beach. The second one was that with air support they could have fought their way out. The third possibility was that part of the force would be evacuated and then later infiltrated back in as guerrillas and the other part of the force would actually remain in that whole Zapata Peninsula area and operate as guerrillas in the expanse to the west. It was always believed they could get out by sea because the CIA's sea operations had always been very successful.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Were you aware that the troops were trained and instructed that in the event they couldn't hold their lodgment they were to fall back onto the beaches for evacuation, and only if that failed would they operate as guerrilla forces?

ANSWER: No, we weren't. That wasn't in the plan and we were not present at the final briefing.

QUESTION: Did you brief the Joint Chiefs on all the parts of the plan?

ANSWER: Yes, all except the question of the air strikes.

QUESTION: What was your understanding of the air strikes?

ANSWER: There would be air strikes on D-Day. This D-2 air strike didn't come in until the last few days. The air plan consisted of nothing but D-Day strikes. Our understanding of the plan was always that the air strikes would be conducted at dawn from Puerto Cabezas.

QUESTION: Would you look back in your notes and see when you briefed the Chiefs and essentially what was in your briefing so we'll know what they heard about the plan?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

STATEMENT: There were four official papers that the Joint Chiefs considered. The first was the original Trinidad Plan. The Second was the Zapata Evaluation. Third was the evaluation of whether or not we could put a small force in the Oriente Province and they could hang on, and fourth was the evaluation of the team's trip to Guatemala. They were briefed on these official papers and at their regular meetings I brought them up to date on what was going on. At several of these meetings they were briefed on changes to the plan and they approved them.

QUESTION: Were these briefings for information or to get their decision?

ANSWER: Generally speaking, when I briefed them it was on some paper or something that they were being asked to approve.

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[REDACTED]

([REDACTED])
[REDACTED]
QUESTION: Would you say then that the Chiefs did have all the essential elements of this plan and did consider the plan adequate?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Did you feel you had the option to the guerrilla alternative?

ANSWER: Yes, I've always thought we had the option to make that decision before the force got pressed right down to the beach.

GENERAL GRAY: As D-Day approached it seemed to me that popular support was developing and building. We did measure all the military factors we thought were necessary. However, it was very difficult to get an accurate fix on where the militia was.

QUESTION: You and the DOD did consider the logistic problem and took action to strengthen the logistic plan. Is that a fair statement?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

STATEMENT: In other words, logistically speaking, you had planned a very heavy back up to insure a successful operation.

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Would you say that you saw this plan develop, that you had adequate contact with the CIA so that your group, at least, had full knowledge of the developments and anything that looked doubtful was taken before the Joint Chiefs?

ANSWER: That's right.

QUESTION: Is it true that while the Joint Chiefs never had a presentation on the over-all Zapata Plan at one time, they were briefed on all the pieces of the plan, so they could be said to have knowledge of the entire plan?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: What concern was expressed over the fact that there were only small boats to unload the HUSTON off Red Beach?

ANSWER: I actually didn't know that detail.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Did you know that the ATLANTICO and the CARIBE had gone south a hundred or two hundred miles and actually escaped from control for a number of hours?

ANSWER: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Do you recall when you discovered that?

ANSWER: It's in our log. As soon as we became aware of it we told CINCLANT to round them up.

STATEMENT: Our position on all of this was that we would do anything as long as it was approved, and then CIA carried the ball on getting the approval.

GENERAL TAYLOR: After listening to General Gray's testimony I now feel that the Joint Chiefs had a more complete appraisal of the plan and consequently gave a more complete approval.

GENERAL GRAY: I believe there should have been a final briefing on the over-all plan about April 12th. I wrote that into the tasks that were to be followed by the different agencies. I believe this would have permitted a more detailed evaluation of the plan and all the changes that had been made up to that point.

GENERAL GRAY: Speaking for myself, there could have been a more detailed evaluation, but I don't think it would have changed my evaluation that the plans should have gone ahead.

GENERAL BONESTEEL

At this point General Gray left and General Bonesteel appeared before the Group.

QUESTION: How can we better cope with the cold war problem?

ANSWER: It is essential that we have a cold war indications center where all the traffic of messages and intelligence from all the departments would come into a central area which is organized and staffed to keep an eye on what is happening throughout the world in order to flag situations on which it may be necessary to take action. This institution needs to be staffed by people from the State Department, the military and intelligence communities.

QUESTION: Would this group make plans?

[REDACTED]

ANSWER: It could if expanded to this. However, its primary purpose would be to call attention to situations that might require some kind of action.

QUESTION: Isn't this the State Department's area of responsibility?

ANSWER: Possibly, but it wouldn't work as well under the State Department as it would if the various agency representatives worked as coequals.

STATEMENT: The reason this sort of center is necessary is because of schizophrenia. The DOD probably believes that power is the final criteria of Communist success, whereas in the State Department there are probably only a half dozen people that understand the requirements for power. Furthermore, you can't get the State Department to plan on the use of power in any future operations. Actually you have no one place to get the proper interagency coordination on cold war matters.

QUESTION: The NSC was organized for this purpose, wasn't it?

ANSWER: Yes, sir. The NSC is a mechanism for doing this. However, it has no staff except stenographic.

QUESTION: Are you suggesting that if the NSC was reorganized they could do this?

ANSWER: No, I would in fact revise the NSC.

QUESTION: Who would spark off the actions that needed to be taken throughout the world?

ANSWER: The cold war indications center.

QUESTION: Where would be the central place that the plan would be developed?

ANSWER: Under NSC auspices.

~~SECRET~~

SECRETARY RUSK

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

At this point the Study Group reconvened in Secretary Rusk's office in the State Department. Present were:

GENERAL TAYLOR

SECRETARY RUSK

MR. KENNEDY

COMMANDER MITCHELL

MR. DULLES

LT COLONEL TARWATER

After a few introductory remarks Secretary Rusk was asked his estimate of the probability of success of the Zapata Plan.

SECRETARY RUSK: It was in the neighborhood of fifty per cent. It appeared the landing might be followed by further uprisings. If this failed the force could become guerrillas.

MR. DULLES: I think we all looked upon this as a pretty risky operation.

SECRETARY RUSK: The risks of the operation were accepted, however, because the importance of success was fully appreciated. Time was running out. It was the last chance in some time to have this job done by Cubans. Otherwise we might have to do this with American personnel and this would be less desirable. Castro's police power was increasing and he was also receiving a large inflow of Soviet arms. Further, it should be pointed out that when we talked about the possibility of failure we talked about far more disastrous results than actually occurred. For example, we had discussed the possibility of such things as being ousted from the OAS or censure by the UN, and lively and adverse reaction by our allies in Europe. The results that developed were not as serious as those that we had considered.

QUESTION: What was the feeling of the likelihood of a popular uprising following the landing?

SECRETARY RUSK: There was a very considerable likelihood of popular uprisings.

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By JK NARS, Date 6/23/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

AT THE PENTAGON

TWELFTH MEETING

8 MAY 1961

PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

GENERAL WHITE

GENERAL DECKER

GENERAL SHOUP

MR. BISSELL

COLONEL BLACK

[REDACTED]

COMMANDER MITCHELL

MR. COX

MR. SMITH

LT COLONEL TARWATER

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

III TRACED TO TIME

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(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

COLONEL BLACK

The first person to appear before the Group was Colonel Black. Colonel Black said he is currently Assistant to Mr. Gilpatric.

QUESTION: Is Mr. Gilpatric heading a task group on clandestine warfare at this time?

COLONEL BLACK: He's the head of a Presidential task force trying to develop a paper on Viet Nam. It is not a generalized consideration of paramilitary operations; it's just restricted to Viet Nam.

QUESTION: Were you involved at all in the Cuba operations?

COLONEL BLACK: No, sir.

COLONEL BLACK: It might be useful, however, if I told you, first, to what extent the Secretary's Office had been involved in the Cuba operation and, second, to go on with some brief ideas of my own as to the lessons to be learned from this particular exercise, if that would be of any help.

COLONEL BLACK: Mr. Gilpatric was involved in the Cuba operation through his Thursday meetings of the 5412 Group. However, as far as this particular operation was concerned, Mr. Gilpatric did not have much direct responsibility.

QUESTION: Who's the Chairman of the 5412 Group?

MR. DULLES: We don't have a Chairman. I am the action officer. I handle the proposals for action by the CIA and they are approved, disapproved, or referred for further study.

QUESTION: The 5412 Committee is under the NSC. Is that right?

MR. DULLES: It's under the President, I would say. It was formed under that document, NSC 5412, but the practical working out of the Committee was under the President. The President often wanted the covert operations presented to him in a smaller group than the full NSC meeting.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Then this Group would take any new proposals to the President direct?

MR. DULLES: If it was of the consequence that the Secretary of State or Gordon Gray thought it should go to the President. Often we would pass on an operation without going to the President.

COLONEL BLACK: That's about all I can contribute to the actual Cuba exercise, as such. I should say also that I am speaking for myself, Colonel Black. I haven't checked this out with my boss. It seems to me that the principal lessons are these: First, we can't do it with mirrors; I have a feeling that we are trying to do very significant things in the struggle against the Communist power without really going all the way. We are trying to do it with some trick or gimmick. Second, I don't think personally from my work here in Washington that the United States fully understands how to use the power which we have at our disposal, that's political, military, and economic. Third, I don't think we have yet the interdepartmental structure to fight the cold war. Fourth, I think we seriously need action to halt the erosion of America's will to win. I don't think we really go into the battle against Communism to win. We go in there to hold our own and this, in turn, has a very bad effect on all our policies, on the morale of our people. Finally, I have some criteria for solution of the problem which is just basic criteria. I have them written up for your four members.

QUESTION: You mention your opinion of the inadequacy of the Governmental structure. Do you have specific suggestions?

COLONEL BLACK: We need a National Security Operations Center. This should be right in the White House. In my judgment, it can't be anywhere else. The State Department is setting up an operation center, and I'm sure the State Department will claim that any interdepartmental organization such as this should be in the State Department. I'm convinced, both from what I've seen in the field and in Washington, that you cannot effectively conduct these national security operations under the sole leadership of the State Department.

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The classic example, in my judgment, is South Viet Nam. The President, on the 20th of April, asked Mr. Gilpatric to head up a Presidential task force to try to develop a program to prevent the Communist domination of Viet Nam. It soon became apparent that the problem as the Department of State saw it was one of maintaining the primacy of State in the control of all operations overseas, rather than really focussing on the problem of defeating the Communist effort in South Viet Nam.

QUESTION: You say they are reluctant to work towards success?

COLONEL BLACK: They spend most of their time trying to make sure that the Government decision-making authority and control will be in the State Department. They went right back to their old principle that the first and essential element of the Viet Nam problem is to reform Diem; reform his government, and giving that priority over defeating the Communists. Defense has always felt that primary emphasis must be placed on finding a solution to the internal security problem, and to do that the reform of the Diem government would have to wait until you had established a reasonable degree of internal security. The State Department wants to make any additional military effort to improve the internal security program sort of a quid pro quo for instituting these internal reforms. The basic point is that the direction of this sort of thing has to be on the basis of national security rather than on foreign policy.

QUESTION: You say then that such a center should be in the White House and not in the State Department?

COLONEL BLACK: That's right. I have here a paper that sets forth the concept, and a longer paper that sets forth some argumentation.

QUESTION: When you say a center, do you mean a committee?

COLONEL BLACK: No, sir.

QUESTION: Who's in charge?

[REDACTED]

COLONEL BLACK: The President. It has to be close at hand to the White House so that he can use it whenever he wants, but it should be manned by professionals from all departments and agencies of the Government.

QUESTION: Is it simply to provide information and intelligence and that sort of thing, or is it to be an action group that checks on things and starts interdepartmental work and so on?

COLONEL BLACK: First, it gives the President up-to-the-minute intelligence; secondly, it gives him communication with which he can personally communicate to his ambassadors and to his field commanders all over the world, and it keeps him abreast of the status of approved projects and programs that have been started in the Government. It gives him, in effect, a mechanism for command supervision which I don't think he has today.

QUESTION: I don't see how he'd accomplish that.

COLONEL BLACK: In effect, he could determine from the information available in the center whether we're making any progress toward our objectives or not.

STATEMENT: Gilpatric's task force on Viet Nam seems to be symptomatic of our weakness. The present consensus is the need to pull these things together and to get a program and to follow up on it, but now they're using ad hoc methods with a task force committee limiting their scope to one particular country which can't be considered by itself, in my opinion. The question in my mind is should there be some machinery on some permanent basis whereby you have this machinery essentially, State, CIA, and Defense, and a sort of permanent committee with broader responsibilities, in a sense like the 5412 Committee, but with broader responsibilities, not just to consider covert operations but all cold war operations.

MR. DULLES: Then you have another task force with Mr. Nitze on Cuba, another one on Iran under the State Department, and there was a fourth one under the State Department.

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RESPONSE: If you put it in the White House, it means in the Old State Department Building and then you have a medley of problems such as security, and so on, and I think you should give the President a cushion. If you have the President sending out uncoordinated messages to Ambassadors all over the world, you're going to have chaos.

STATEMENT: These are practical questions that have to be solved.

MR. DULLES: Something of this kind should be established and the State Department, when they get the right men, ought to share in it.

COLONEL BLACK: The way to get around the interdepartmental problem is to have representatives of the departments in the command post as working members. They're not going to be representing their departments, they're going to be working for the President, but they would keep their departments informed and they know where to get information, and so forth.

GENERAL TAYLOR: We are facing the same problem in an international area that we faced in Defense; namely, the concept has now been abandoned by the Army, Navy, and Air Force, that the departments per se can go out and fight wars. The people who do go out and fight wars are a task force. I think we are faced with that in international relations. The State Department has developed people with certain skills, as has CIA and Defense. There ought to be something in the economic field, where you have that component well represented. Then the Ambassador sits on top of this group and

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reports back to the President. Now we haven't got to this, but isn't this the concept?

MR. DULLES: Yes, and the Ambassador reports back to the President and not to the State Department, and your economic capability ought to tie right in.

QUESTION: To whom do you look at the present time for that kind of economic warfare advice?

MR. DULLES: Mr. Ball. But we've never had since the war any office that looked upon the economic thing as a weapon to defeat someone.

STATEMENT: Well, I think we ought to take this paper and read it over and possibly have another session on the matter.

COLONEL BLACK: I would just like to make one point before I leave and I think it is an important one. This is the difference in thinking between State and Defense. State tends to be reluctant to apply national power, particularly military power, during its conduct of diplomacy because of the fear of complicating the strictly political and psychological situations. Elements in State have gotten to the point where they think that power is basically an immoral thing and the application of power in any form is an immoral act, and this is not true. It depends on whether or not you use power to preserve peace or use it for an immoral purpose.

STATEMENT: I think that it's important that the President have representatives of both points of view, so that neither one would have freedom to dominate.

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[REDACTED]

Castro. These people were to come into the beachhead and pick up this material, and then the beachhead would expand and they would very soon have a formidable military organization. Considering this plan and the location of the enemy forces on the basis of the time and space factors, it appeared to me that they could accomplish their objective. Sometime later the Chairman said the President would not approve the TRINIDAD Plan because it smacked too much of Normandy, which would make it impossible to deny U.S. involvement. Consequently CIA was directed to develop some alternatives. Later Gen. Gray came in and briefed us on some alternate plans and, as I understood it, there was no question about the Trinidad thing. It was out right there as far as doing it in its original form. A new requirement was levied on CIA to make their landing where there was an airfield. It was my personal feeling that the airfield requirement virtually restricted the operation to the Zapata region. The JCS decided that there was no question about it, the Zapata area had the greatest possibility of success of the alternatives we were considering. Following this there was considerable discussion about how many aircraft Castro had, and the best way to eliminate the tanks. There seemed to be no question about being able to destroy Castro's aircraft with napalm, strafing and rockets, nor the ability to disrupt the tanks. That brings us to the place where the decision was made to go in and try the Zapata thing. However, one thought was predominate. You must achieve and maintain air superiority or you are not going to be able to get ashore.

QUESTION: Did you feel that Zapata was as good a plan as Trinidad?

GENERAL SHOUP: No, sir. I questioned the swamp area. However, after considerable thought and discussion, I was satisfied that by dropping paratroopers to block the roads and by using anti-tank mines you could accomplish the same objectives in the Zapata area that you could in the Trinidad area. However, there were complications in the distances the people would have to come to get the weapons, the problem of maneuvering would be more difficult, and the possibility of debouching would also be more difficult from the Zapata area.

QUESTION: There was no civilian population in the area at all, was there?

[REDACTED]

GENERAL SHOUP: There were about 1,800 people where the landings were made.

QUESTION: You made the point that one of the essential parts of the TRINIDAD Plan was the fact that they had a population there on which they could base their expansion. Did you consider that possibility existed in Zapata?

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, sir. The idea was that time and space factors were favorable. It was my understanding that there were lots of people just waiting for these arms, that they would get them in the same manner as they would have in the TRINIDAD Plan. However, you were closer to some of Castro's army forces and tank forces and you would have more difficulty debouching from this area.

QUESTION: Did you visualize that this landing would attract sizable Castro forces?

GENERAL SHOUP: Obviously, once he determined the location of the main invasion, Castro was bound to bring in his forces.

QUESTION: How were the dissident Cuban civilians going to get their arms then?

GENERAL SHOUP The parachutists and anti-tank mines would block the roadways. Then the whole area would be in a state of revolt. There would be no problem of them coming through. These people would have been much closer to their source of arms than the enemy, because the enemy didn't know where they were coming in.

QUESTION: Was there any impression that there was going to be a pre-D-Day message to the population?

GENERAL SHOUP: My understanding was that the possibilities of uprisings were increasing, that people were just waiting for these arms and equipment, and as soon as they heard where the invasion was that they would be coming after them.

QUESTION: If you were in charge of the defenses in this area couldn't you get some artillery in and really give them hell?



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GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, sir, any corporal would have said that.

QUESTION: The Chiefs ^{disparately} rated the chances of success for Zapata as something less than fair. What was your appraisal of the chances of success of this operation?

GENERAL SHOUP: The plan they had should have accomplished the mission in Zapata, if the plan had been brought to fruition.

QUESTION: You did not expect a quick or strong reaction from the Castro forces?

GENERAL SHOUP: I expected them to react, but not with some of the equipment with which they did react, and I don't think they would have if the plans had been carried out.

QUESTION: As you saw this plan develop, the amphibious landing on a hostile shore, did you have any misgivings?

GENERAL SHOUP: I very frankly made this statement, if this kind of an operation can be done with this kind of a force with this much training and knowledge about it, then we are wasting our time in our divisions, we ought to go on leave for three months out of four.

MR. DULLES: Do you realize how many military men we had on this task force? Some of your very best officers. We took a great deal of responsibility, but we called on the Defense Department and I looked to them for military judgments. I didn't look to our people for military judgments.

QUESTION: General Shoup, isn't that statement of yours somewhat in contradiction with your over-all optimism that this plan would work?

GENERAL SHOUP: No, sir, it is not.

QUESTION: Would you say that you took the same interest in this operation and made the same personal analysis as you would have done had you been in charge?

GENERAL SHOUP: I'll say this. I spent a lot of sleepless hours over this because I worried about the thing because there was no plan for helping these men if there was something unforeseen, an act of God or something, that prevented a successful landing. In my opinion there would be no way to save

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then. There was no way to guarantee its success, but if the plan was executed, as planned, I believe it would have been successful. I couldn't find out all I wanted to about the plan. I knew I wasn't supposed to. It wasn't my responsibility. Had I been completely responsible I think I would have known about everything. There were only four people in my headquarters that knew anything about the plan.

STATEMENT: Let's go back to this question of military responsibility. Certainly you, as Commandant of the Marine Corps, had no responsibility for it, but as a member of the Joint Chiefs you did have responsibility for this operation.

GENERAL SHOUP: That's not my understanding.

STATEMENT: At least the JCS as a corporate body had responsibility for this operation.

GENERAL SHOUP: That's not my understanding, only insofar as the Commander in Chief might want to know something about the adequacy of the plan, or the probability of success. Otherwise I don't feel that I or the other Joint Chiefs had any responsibility for the success of this plan.

QUESTION: The Joint Chiefs are by law the advisors to the Secretary of Defense, National Security Council, and the President. Consequently, would you say that you should volunteer any advice on this subject?

GENERAL SHOUP: As a member of the Joint Chiefs I don't know what the Chairman did. I don't know what happened at a lot of meetings at the White House or the State Department but I do know this, that within the corporate body I for one emphasized time after time that we had to have air superiority and we had to help this outfit fend off the force they were going to have opposing them down there.

ADMIRAL BURKE: There are three or four things that are the basis of this thing that ought to be clear. One is the responsibility of the Chiefs to comment on the plan. Another is the actual conduct of the operation, which was all in one place and that was in CIA.

MR. DULLES: But that was done by military personnel.

ADMIRAL BURKE: But not under our command structure.

STATEMENT: But as advisors to the President the JCS had a responsibility. The President had the right to look to the Joint Chiefs for advice during the planning or execution phase if they thought they had something important to offer.

GENERAL SHOUP: That's true, as limited by their knowledge of all aspects of the plan.

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[REDACTED]

STATEMENT: And in the absence of hearing from the Chiefs he had a right to assume that everything was going satisfactorily.

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, to the limit of our knowledge. I want to tell you this right now. Had I as an individual heard that they were going to call off the air strikes I'd have asked that the Commander in Chief be informed. I'd have called him myself because it was absolutely essential to success. The D-2 affair was only a half effort.

MR. DULLES: General, may I add this. The D-2 Day was essentially a plot, not a plan. The plan was the D-Day strike.

QUESTION: Do you feel that you had absolute and complete knowledge about this operation?

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely not.

QUESTION: Did you understand that the President and his advisors were looking to you for your military evaluation of this plan?

GENERAL SHOUP: The thing that we were asked to do was to determine which of the three alternatives was the best.

QUESTION: But then after that, did you understand that during that period of time that the President was looking to you, the JCS, for the military evaluation of the operation?

GENERAL SHOUP: I would have to presume that in accordance with his title as Commander in Chief he would be thinking about the military part.

QUESTION: But you understand that he wanted to get your advice and ideas also?

GENERAL SHOUP: That was never stated.

QUESTION: What I am getting at is that if you feel that you didn't have full knowledge and information on the plan and at the same time the President was looking to you for advice, it seems to me it would be almost impossible for you to give him the military evaluation.

GENERAL SHOUP: Well, you had to look at it in the context of what the agency said about the uprisings. I had no possible way to know or evaluate them. That in itself was a particularly important factor.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

STATEMENT: There was a general impression that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved this operation. I don't think there is any doubt but what they went ahead thinking that you and the other Joint Chiefs had approved the plan, but you now say that you didn't have full knowledge and information in order to evaluate the plan. That in itself is of some significance for the future.

GENERAL SHOUP: One of the main features relating to the ultimate success of this was not whether you could put these ships in here and unload this military equipment, whether the people were properly trained to fend off a reasonable enemy effort.

STATEMENT: Your idea of the plan is entirely different from some other peoples' idea of the plan.

GENERAL SHOUP: I'm telling the truth as I know it.

STATEMENT: I don't think there is any doubt about that.

STATEMENT: The idea that the people would land on the beach and then take off into the swamp is a new one to us.

ADMIRAL BURKE: There was great emphasis on the uprisings and we spent hours and hours determining how to get additional equipment. We ended up with equipment for 30,000 people. The only slight difference I have with General Shoup is that it was my understanding that this group had to be able to hold a beachhead for some time, for several days.

STATEMENT: It's very significant that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, whom the President of the United States and the Secretary of State thought had approved this plan, had an entirely different idea of what the plan was. It seems that something has gone wrong somewhere along the line.

GENERAL SHOUP: This whole thing was a function of time.

STATEMENT: But when I asked you, you said they were going to get out of there the same day. They were only going to hold a beachhead long enough to unload the equipment. There wasn't any possibility of anybody coming down there. There wasn't anybody around there. Their idea was to hold that beachhead. I think it is important that when the President and the Secretary of State think they have your view, that they do have your view.

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GENERAL TAYLOR: You feel that the Joint Chiefs recognized their responsibility for advising the President, but did not make any special comments to him mainly because you thought the plan was going along all right.

GENERAL SHOUP: I think you have to preface all these remarks by recognizing that I was not consulted as to whether such a thing ought to happen. That wasn't my business.

GENERAL TAYLOR: The overthrow of Castro you accepted?

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, that was national policy.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Wouldn't you say that the Joint Chiefs had every right and responsibility if they didn't believe that an amphibious landing of this kind would succeed, to so advise the President?

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Were you satisfied with the plan as being a feasible, reasonable plan?

GENERAL SHOUP: To accomplish the mission as I understood it, not the destruction of the armed forces.

QUESTION: What was the mission?

GENERAL SHOUP: The mission was to get some well-trained military people into Cuba, who could gather into their fold and equip all the people that were just waiting for a chance to get at Castro, then these military people could develop a real military organization and increase their strength to the extent that the whole Castro regime would fall apart.

QUESTION: The success of this operation was wholly dependent upon popular support?

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely. Ultimate success.

STATEMENT: Not only ultimate success, but any success really.

QUESTION: Who gave you this information on the uprisings?

GENERAL SHOUP: I don't know. I suppose it was CIA. Well, it's obvious we wouldn't be taking 30,000 additional rifles if we didn't think there was going to be somebody to use them. I don't think any military man would ever think that this force could overthrow Castro without support. They could never expect anything but annihilation.

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely. I don't think there is any doubt at all. Eventually 1,500 people cannot hold out against many, many thousands.

GENERAL SHOUP: No, I wouldn't, unless 1,200 Marines are going to be assisted by 30,000 Cubans.

GENERAL SHOUP: No, they didn't, but we were getting materials ready for

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, I asked about it on the first briefings. Even in the rainy season parts of it were passable by foot and in the dry season much of it was passable by foot. There were a number of egresses other than the roads. That's what we were told.

GENERAL SHOUP: To my knowledge I was personally present each time that General Gray briefed the Joint Chiefs.

GENERAL SHOUP: No, sir.

GENERAL SHOUP: I don't think that at this time in 1961 or hereafter you are going to do it covertly.

GENERAL SHOUP: I did not.

([REDACTED])
[REDACTED]
GENERAL WHITE

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: What action was taken on the over-all U.S. plan of action for Cuba developed by the JCS in late January?

GENERAL WHITE: I don't know.

QUESTION: What was the JCS view of the military feasibility of the Trinidad and Zapata plans?

GENERAL WHITE: Our evaluation was that the operation had a fair chance of success based on (1) the mission and (2) the intelligence, which indicated that popular uprisings were likely. The next point that weighed heavily in my mind was the probability that this force could escape into the hills to the northwest of the beach area and join with guerrillas there if they were unable to enlarge the beachhead. The third point was the importance of surprise, particularly in the air part of the picture. The Zapata plan was briefed at a JCS meeting. I was not there. Curt LeMay was, however, and he filled me in on the three alternatives; and the fact that the Chiefs thought that the Trinidad operation was still the best, but that of the three alternatives presented, Zapata was probably the best.

QUESTION: As you learned more about the Zapata plan, did you ever make an appraisal in your own mind as to the probability of success?

GENERAL WHITE: I felt all along that the success or failure of this operation depended almost entirely upon the reaction of the Cuban people. If we were able to establish and enlarge the beachhead somewhat, plus other subsidiary operations, if we did these things, the Cuban people would join in.

QUESTION: Describe your recollection of the beachhead plan. How did you visualize that this force would behave when they got ashore?

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GENERAL WHITE: Well, the number one thing that I felt was vital was surprise air attacks on the several air fields. While I don't have a high regard for the Cuban air force, certainly it is a prerequisite for going ashore that you have air control, and I think the air strikes were the key to it and surprise was the key to the key so to speak. It seemed to me that if the location and timing of the attack were not known, that they would have a very good chance of establishing at least sufficient lodgment to be able to escape without disaster.

QUESTION: Assuming the air strikes?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, and that the air strikes were achieved with surprise.

QUESTION: When the Joint Chiefs commented on Trinidad and as Zapata initially developed to ^{have} bring the only strikes on D Day, did that appear adequate to knock out the Castro force?

GENERAL WHITE: It was felt that heavy surprise attack, and if I could have only had one, I would have picked the one on D Day rather than one earlier, for two reasons: (1) I think the early one may have tipped off that this thing was coming, (2) I remember mentioning down there that I was a little bit worried about the relationship between Cuba and Guatemala because it would be obvious that the aircraft were coming from there, and I wasn't quite sure what the situation would be. At another point I thought that if we did do the pre-D Day strikes, there was a pretty good chance that world reaction would be such that the thing would be called off, and I had been keen on the United States seeking the initiative in some areas, and I thought that on balance this was a feasible show and I wanted to see it go on.

QUESTION: How did you feel about the final limited plan of eight sorties against the air fields?

GENERAL WHITE: In my opinion, it was fatally weak.

QUESTION: Would it have been better not to have had them.

GENERAL WHITE: I think the best operation would have been to launch as heavy a strike as we could on the air fields on the day of the attack.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Who was the proponent of the D-2 strikes, Allen?

I don't recall that point.

MR. DULLES: I think that it was partly in our shop and partly with Mac Bundy, as I recall. The idea of the defections -- this was one of the keys to the idea that the planes that were striking Cuban airfields were operating from Cuba.

MR. DULLES: I can't say whether that limited strike concept was ever brought over here or not. I think it must have been known to General Gray, but I don't know whether it was discussed in the Joint Chiefs.

ADMIRAL BURKE: It was, but not before it was decided to do it. I think that this was done at the behest of State in order to get a Cuban defector ahead of time, so that it would be believed that Cubans were conducting the air strikes from Cuba.

STATEMENT: Well, we'll see what Gray's record shows on that.

QUESTION: You thought that Zapata looked like a feasible plan?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes. However, I felt it was inferior to the Trinidad plan.

QUESTION: Did you feel that you had a reasonable understanding of what the plan amounted to by the time D Day approached?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, I had a reasonable understanding of the plan as it was supposed to go but didn't.

QUESTION: Would you say you made a personal study of this at least of the air elements?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, and I had action officers who were privileged with this information who worked very close with the Joint Staff and with CIA and on appropriate occasions they briefed me on what was going on in addition to the meetings we had formally in the JCS.

QUESTION: Do you recall when you learned about this D-2 plan?

GENERAL WHITE: No, I do not. I have no memory of any change. The D-1 strike and the D Day strikes were the ones that I was under the impression would go.

QUESTION: I forgot the D-1 air strikes, Allen. That was discussed I know, but did that ever get going?

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MR. DULLES: Well, that was discussed, but it never went.

GENERAL WHITE: May I say I remember very well the discussion of defectors. We got into it because we had the air defense force moving down to Homestead in Florida with its additional radar, and we wanted to get the defectors in and to be on guard in case the Cuban air force made a strike against Florida.

QUESTION: You were in favor of this plan then?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, to the degree that it had a fair chance of success on the basis that the objective was to get a rallying of Cuban people.

QUESTION: Did you make any distinction between Zapata and Trinidad?

GENERAL WHITE: In my opinion the Trinidad operation was a better one, but once the decision was made to go into Zapata, we backed it..

QUESTION: You wouldn't have backed it if you didn't think there would be a chance of success?

GENERAL WHITE: I think it also had a fair chance of success, but I think the chances were better in the Trinidad operation.

QUESTION: Viewing this from the point of view of the President, you, of course, felt that the JCS were the primary military advisors. He heard nothing from the Chiefs with regard to any infeasibility of this plan. Is it fair to say that the Chiefs would have volunteered their comment if they really thought that this thing was going badly?

GENERAL WHITE: Without any question. The problem was that there were last minute changes of which we did not know.

QUESTION: You refer to the last minute cancellation of the air strikes?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes.

STATEMENT: But that was just one factor.

GENERAL WHITE: I think that was a very key factor, sir.

STATEMENT: Well, in this operation, I think we would be convinced that the plan wouldn't have been any more successful if we had had the air strikes.

[REDACTED]

GENERAL WHITE: Well, I really believe that the Cuban air force had a whale of an effect on the bad outcome. It is difficult to say what an air strike on D Day at dawn would have done, but it might very well have made the difference in my opinion.

QUESTION: In the performance of the T-33s, were you surprised at how effective they were?

GENERAL WHITE: I was surprised to find that they were armed.

QUESTION: You did not consider that they were combat aircraft?

GENERAL WHITE: We did not.

QUESTION: Well, had you known they were armed?

GENERAL WHITE: Well, there again you come back to how effective the air strikes would have been. I certainly would have wanted the T-33s to be one of the main targets of the strike force.

QUESTION: Was it any surprise to you that these T-33s could take out the B-26s.

GENERAL WHITE: No, there was no surprise about that. That's another thing, the B-26s were used as air cover over the beaches. The B-26 is a light bomber.

STATEMENT: Yes, but you knew that was the case -- that that was the only cover they would have on the beach.

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, but they were supposed to have air strikes which would come first and the B-26s, as I understood it, would be used largely for ground support.

QUESTION: You said that you would have recommended that the T-33s be knocked out?

GENERAL WHITE: In planning these strikes for the three airfields, certainly I would have urged that we concentrate strikes on the fields that had the T-33s.

QUESTION: Would you have made a recommendation that they be knocked out?

GENERAL WHITE: We didn't know that they were armed.

QUESTION: Based on the information you had, then you would never have recommended that they be knocked out?

GENERAL WHITE: They would have been included in the over-all plan to knock out Castro's air force.

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STATEMENT: Yes, but they were on the field on D-2, but they didn't knock them out.

GENERAL WHITE: Had we known that the T-33s were armed, we might well have highlighted the field where the T-33s were located.

QUESTION: Did you think that the crews they had were sufficient in number? Did that concern you at all?

GENERAL WHITE: I think the numbers were adequate. We sent an Air Force officer down as part of a team to make an evaluation. They made quite a complete report. The report was very favorable on the quality of the Cuban pilots.

QUESTION: By the time D Day afternoon came, the crews were exhausted because they had to fly from Nicaragua to Cuba in a seven-hour trip.

STATEMENT: This is a very important point. I think the record shows that they had 17 Cuban pilots and about six American pilots. Now, suppose they had knocked out Castro's aircraft and then provided air cover over the beach because the invasion force immediately attracted very heavy forces of the Castro ground ^{into} movement. As I picture it, this would have put a major strain on this little air force.

ADMIRAL BURKE: I think some of the pilots' energy was dissipated in sitting up all night waiting to go and they didn't go, but this was just as bad as going.

QUESTION: How many pilots would it take to keep two planes over the airfield during daylight?

GENERAL WHITE: Do you want me to check it or give you an off-hand answer?

QUESTION: Did that ever occur to you during this time?

GENERAL WHITE: Perhaps not specifically, but I'm sure I evaluated it in my own mind and my people did.

QUESTION: What was your concept of this plan? What was it intended to do, and how would they go about it?

GENERAL WHITE: It was intended to make a lodgment and then fan out to gain as much of the beachhead as possible, expecting that there would be a great many of the guerrilla people and other defectors that would join in, and we had ammunition and equipment to give them as they came in to the fold.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
ULTRA SENSITIVE

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QUESTION: The guerrillas were to come in to the beach?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, wherever they could join in.

QUESTION: Then they would just come down into that area where the landing took place?

GENERAL WHITE: I understand that there were leaflets to be dropped and a general call for the people to rise against Castro.

QUESTION: When was the uprising to take place?

GENERAL WHITE: I think as soon as it could be generated.

QUESTION: Was it to take place simultaneously or within a short period?

GENERAL WHITE: Within a short period, I would say beginning with D Day it ought to snowball.

QUESTION: How did you visualize any great number of these civilians coming in to the beachhead area with Castro's forces coming down the same route, in, behind, and along the lines of communication?

GENERAL WHITE: I understand there were a good number of defectors who came over even under the circumstances.

QUESTION: Did you think that this group of 1,200 people could hold this beachhead?

GENERAL WHITE: There was a fair chance of holding the beachhead if the air was knocked out. We had also anticipated that there would be more uprisings throughout Cuba which would divert the Cuban armed forces elsewhere and they would not be able to concentrate on this one place.

STATEMENT: Just so the record is complete, when we had a briefing from one of the pilots, we asked him about the T-33s and he said they weren't aware at that time of the problem or difficulty with the T-33s and they concentrated on the B-26s.

QUESTION: The question of going guerrilla has come up. It was thought that if things went badly, these people could operate as guerrillas. How was this presented to the Joint Chiefs and how did they regard that alternative?

GENERAL WHITE: On this particular operation, I cannot say.

On the Trinidad operation, I've a very clear memory.

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QUESTION: Would you say that the guerrilla phase was specifically studied by the Joint Chiefs?

GENERAL WHITE: Only the fact that there were guerrillas in the area and that it was anticipated that the people would join with them.

QUESTION: Was there any thought to evacuating by sea?

GENERAL WHITE: Not until later in the game.

QUESTION: How did the Joint Chiefs follow the course of the operation after D Day? Were you kept informed of what was going on?

GENERAL WHITE: I was kept informed generally by my action officer.

QUESTION: Did you have liaison with General Gray's office?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Were you aware of the criticality of the ammunition situation at the end of the second day?

GENERAL WHITE: I had heard about it.

QUESTION: But you didn't have any realization that the battle would be won or lost the night of D+1 - D+2 unless they got ammunition?

GENERAL WHITE: No. My impression is that in general we had very little knowledge of what was actually taking place at the beachhead.

QUESTION: How would you define the responsibility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this operation?

GENERAL WHITE: Number one, we were called on for our views; we gave them to the best of our ability; and once the decision was made to go into Zapata, we supported it any way we could.

QUESTION: Would you say you had the responsibility to volunteer advice to the President and since he received no contrary advice he had a right to assume that all was well?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, except that a number of things took place that I did not know about. I knew nothing about the cancellation of the air strikes.

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QUESTION: I'm going to ask the same question I asked General Shoup. Do you feel that the JCS studied this plan and gave it that cold hard look which they would have given it had it been their plan?

GENERAL WHITE: Certainly they did with the Trinidad plan. I don't know about Zapata. I was not there when it was briefed. It was my understanding, however, that the basic over-all considerations were similar. I would say we did not make as detailed an evaluation of the alternatives as we did the Trinidad plan.

QUESTION: Looking back on this thing now with the benefit of experience, how do you feel about the covert nature of the plan? Was it realistic to consider that this could be kept covert - by that I mean a plan that cannot be attributed plausibly to the United States?

GENERAL WHITE: I am sure that we could not expect to train a very sizable group of people with aircraft in any part of the world at least any populated part of the world without the world knowing. So I am sure that the training base in Guatemala was well known to the Cubans. This is hearsay. I was told that somebody briefed many Latin American governments about this forthcoming operation to get their views and met with almost unanimous disapproval. I'd say this alone was enough for a tipoff.

STATEMENT: I believe this was Mr. Berle's mission down south.

QUESTION: Do you have any comment on a landing on a hostile shore which is covert?

GENERAL WHITE: I don't object to the military doing covert things; in fact, this may be a wise way for the future on this sort of thing. But there are certain considerations; I don't believe you should have U.S. officers in uniform because this puts them into a different category and they take risks beyond those which are usually expected of them in peace time. As far as covert operations are concerned, I think probably they should be done under the aegis of some agency other than Defense.

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MR. DULLES: The question is, can there be a section in the Department of Defense that has been sheep-dipped or something. How are we going to do this in the future?

GENERAL WHITE: I think there should be greater Department of Defense participation; in fact, I think perhaps the responsibility ought to be placed on military professionals, but I believe it still should be under the aegis of some other agency. I would not like to see this type of operation attributable to the Department of Defense.

STATEMENT: It might have been done something like this. The CIA could have done everything up to and including recruiting, assembling, and putting them into a covert training area, and organizing the covert protection around it. Training at that point could have been turned over to the Department of Defense. Planning could have been turned over to the Department of Defense and the execution turned over to the Department of Defense.

GENERAL WHITE: That's all right with me. However, I think that the cover should be with the CIA or some agency other than the DOD.

MR. DULLES: When you get an operation this big, the cover blows off.

QUESTION: What do you say about the quality of interdepartmental coordination on this plan?

GENERAL WHITE: I think it could be improved very much. I don't know of a formalized body short of the NSC that takes a problem like this and integrates all the interested Government agencies into a planning group.

STATEMENT: It's been a problem for a long time.

GENERAL WHITE: I think not only in this type of thing but in the cold war. After all, in hot war, we're certainly organized for it and we hope ready for it. Limited wars - we're organized for and we hope prepared for, but this kind of covert operation we're talking about now is part of the cold war. The cold war is on every day of our lives and I think we need a similar organization to fight the cold war.

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QUESTION: Have you spelled that out?

GENERAL WHITE: OCB started this kind of a thing I believe, but it was always kind of loose. The organization we need is not only to oppose Soviet power, but to take the initiative.

STATEMENT: I wish you would give us your thoughts at your leisure.

GENERAL WHITE: My staff has prepared a study on this subject which I subscribe to.

GENERAL WHITE: Almost every agency in the Government is involved in fighting this cold war.

QUESTION: Are you suggesting that possibly the NSC framework is the place to hang this or are you talking about something separate?

GENERAL WHITE: I think the NSC is too high level an organization. I don't think it should be an operating organization. I conceive this to be an operational group. They undoubtedly would have to report to the NSC or send it to the President.

QUESTION: Would you give us your views on this thing?

GENERAL WHITE: My views will be just what is contained in this study.

QUESTION: Will you send us a copy of the study?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Will you go back to the operations for a minute? Do you think that in view of the circumstances, this was given sufficient time and attention by the Joint Staff?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, up to the word "go" but there were a lot of last minute changes.

QUESTION: I understand that, but as of the 15th of March, the "go ahead" signal from a military point of view to the President and to those who were making the decisions was given. Thereafter, there were continuous meetings that took place and nobody came forward and said, this is going to be fatal; we shouldn't go ahead. Really considerable support developed from individual members and from the Chairman. The President understood

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that it was supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In view of all this, do you feel it was given sufficient time and attention by you as an individual and by the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

GENERAL WHITE: I will make the single point that General Shoup made. I think there were times when the Chairman was consulted and although he has been extraordinarily conscientious to keep us informed, I think that things took place at levels above the Joint Chiefs of Staff about which we were not fully informed. On those things which we had cognizance of, I believe the Joint Chiefs accomplished their task.

MR. KENNEDY: For instance, as I look at the records, I see that the original Zapata Plan plus the alternatives were considered by the JCS for twenty minutes.

GENERAL WHITE: I can't tell you the times because I wasn't there, but I believe by virtue of the study that was made on the Trinidad Plan, that it was fairly easy to have a good look at the Zapata Plan and come up with a statement that the Trinidad Plan was still the best, but that of the three alternatives Zapata was the best.

QUESTION: Then your answer is that you feel that you gave sufficient time, opinion and study.

GENERAL WHITE: On an over-all basis, yes, sir.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: Did you brief the pilots before D-2?

[REDACTED]: That's correct.

QUESTION: Were the T-33s considered a dangerous weapon in the hands of Castro?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Were the pilots briefed to knock them out first?

[REDACTED]: No, they were told to knock out any offensive aircraft, including B-26, T-33, Sea Furies and any single-engine combat type aircraft in the parking area.

QUESTION: Was there any priority?

[REDACTED]: Not by aircraft type. The plan was based on destroying all offensive aircraft.

QUESTION: A pilot by the name of [REDACTED] gave us quite a different picture. Was he an important figure there?

[REDACTED]: He was one of our intelligence officers.

QUESTION: Was he at the briefing?

[REDACTED]: He assisted. However, I was the person in charge of the briefing.

QUESTION: Were these T-33s isolated or were they interspersed with the other aircraft?

[REDACTED]: They were isolated to the extent that they were parked on individual revetments.

QUESTION: How many T-33 aircraft were there?

[REDACTED]: There were four on the 6th of April parked at San Antonio de los Banos, there was one parked at Santiago de Cuba, and these were the photos we used for planning our strikes.

QUESTION: How many did you knock out?

[REDACTED]: We knocked out all but two and then between the 15th of April and the 18th of April they managed to get one more aircraft into commission. Out of the five we feel that we knocked out three during the D-2 strikes.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Whose idea was the D-2 air strikes?

[REDACTED]: I cannot tell you that.

QUESTION: Were you in favor of these strikes?

[REDACTED]: I was in favor of any effort that would knock out their offensive air capability.

STATEMENT: It could be argued, I think, that for a limited air strike of only eight planes, you were giving up the benefit of surprise on D-Day. Furthermore, that he should have dispersed his airplanes if he'd used his head.

[REDACTED]: That's what I was afraid of. Our original Zapata Plan was based on strikes on D-Day only. They were to make strikes at dawn and then go back in the afternoon and strike any that hadn't been knocked out in the morning raid.

QUESTION: Did you think that the pre-D Day strikes strengthened the plan?

[REDACTED]: D-1 would strengthen the plan.

STATEMENT: I can see that, but I have real doubt in my mind as to whether you did well by accepting those other D-2 strikes.

GENERAL DECKER

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: What action was taken on the over-all U.S. plan of action for Cuba developed by the JCS in late January?

GENERAL DECKER: Nothing positive.

QUESTION: What was the JCS view of the military feasibility of Trinidad and Zapata?

GENERAL DECKER: We felt that success in terms of the mission, as we understood it, was feasible; that this force would be able to get ashore and establish a bridgehead and thereby provide a catalyst to which other dissident elements throughout Cuba might rally. Trinidad was reviewed first and then several alternatives were considered. However, the JCS considered Trinidad preferable to any of the alternatives.

QUESTION: Did you ever evaluate the chances of success of the Zapata operation in your own mind?

GENERAL DECKER: If this had been a regular military force, Trinidad would have been better for a regular type landing. However, for the purpose of the landing that was planned under the Zapata concept, this area provided a reasonable chance of success.

QUESTION: What was the purpose of Zapata?

GENERAL DECKER: The same as that for Trinidad, to establish a beachhead, serve as a catalyst for uprisings, and get people into the beachhead area to build up the force.

QUESTION: How could people get into the area to build up this force?

GENERAL DECKER: Well, it was more difficult than reaching the Trinidad area. However, this force had a secondary purpose, and that was that if trouble developed that they couldn't handle, they were to go to the hills.

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QUESTION: Did you look at the Zapata area from the possibility of conducting guerrilla operations in the area?

GENERAL DECKER: I thought there was too much swamp. It would be difficult for people to join in the beachhead area. It was visualized that there would be several focal points of activity in the beachhead area.

QUESTION: Did you visualize that one of these groups might be wiped out?

GENERAL DECKER: We pointed out that if surprise was lost they might be wiped out.

QUESTION: To what extent did you go over this plan?

GENERAL DECKER: I went over it thoroughly with Army planners. We reviewed the Trinidad Plan thoroughly. However, since Zapata was so similar, we didn't express our views on it to the degree that we had on Trinidad.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the importance of control of the air? Were the Chiefs satisfied with the plan without pre-D-Day strikes?

GENERAL DECKER: The advantages of pre-D-Day strikes would be that Castro's aircraft would be knocked out prior to the landing. I was in favor of pre-D-Day strikes two or three days in advance.

STATEMENT: I believe that the Zapata Plan included an air strike at dawn on D-Day. The D-2 strikes developed later in April.

GENERAL DECKER: The air plan was changed several times without my knowledge.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the JCS as to the action of the landing force if it effected a lodgment but no uprisings occurred?

GENERAL DECKER: There was supposed to have been an announcement of a provisional government once the bridgehead had been established. Then if this group didn't get support from the populace, they were supposed to go to the hills. I don't recall any discussion of sea evacuation.

QUESTION: How did you follow the course of the operation after D-Day?

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GENERAL DECKER: I was out of the city temporarily on Monday, the 17th, but returned to Washington that evening. General Eddleman attended several meetings in my absence. After my return we were briefed on developments at the JCS meetings.

QUESTION: When did you get the impression that the ammunition situation was critical?

GENERAL DECKER: I believe it was on the 18th when I received word that several of the ships had been sunk.

QUESTION: Was it called to your attention that two ammunition ships had gone as far as 200 miles south?

GENERAL DECKER: Not that I recall.

QUESTION: Did the Chiefs discuss whether or not the attempt to keep this covert was feasible?

GENERAL DECKER: It never occurred to me that we could disown supporting this operation.

QUESTION: Do you feel that CIA is capable of running an operation like this?

GENERAL DECKER: I'm not able to say if they were capable. I will say as a general rule, however, that military operations should be controlled by the military.

QUESTION: Do you think that at some point the control should have been passed to the military?

GENERAL DECKER: As long as the United States is going to back an operation of this sort, it seems that the military should be responsible for the whole thing. They should do the planning, training, evaluation, and the execution.

QUESTION: What role would CIA play in this kind of an operation then?

GENERAL DECKER: I think they would continue to handle the strictly covert parts of the plan. The only part that I believe the military should take over from the CIA would be the military aspects of the operation.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Were you surprised by the effectiveness of Castro's forces?

GENERAL DECKER: I wasn't surprised that most remained loyal. I was surprised at the speed and effectiveness with which they moved.

QUESTION: Did you consider the effectiveness of the T-33s as being a major threat to the operation?

GENERAL DECKER: That point was not made.

QUESTION: How do you view the JCS responsibility in this sort of an operation?

GENERAL DECKER: To give our best judgments and evaluations to CIA and anyone else that asks for them and is entitled to them.

QUESTION: If you thought things were not as they should have been, would you have taken the initiative to advise the President or other appropriate personnel about this fact?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes, and we were making recommendations to CIA.

ADMIRAL BURKE: In this connection, I think that General Lemnitzer suggested (1) that we fly air cover, (2) that the Navy put air cover over the beachhead area at dawn on D+1, and (3) that we strike their tanks. These were not formal or written recommendations. They were simply put forth to Mr. Bissell.

QUESTION: As I recall, the Chiefs did not make any recommendations to the President?

GENERAL DECKER: If we had thought the plan would fail, we certainly would have advised the President.

QUESTION: How could interdepartmental planning and coordination be better effected in a future similar operation, and how should a paramilitary operation be fitted into our governmental machinery?

GENERAL DECKER: As far as coordination is concerned between CIA and DOD, I think it was all that could be expected. I would say, however, that authority and responsibility were not adequately centered in one person.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: What can we do to make our paramilitary operations better in the future? I believe that the Army is the only service with Special Forces. Does the Army have plans for expansion of these forces?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes, but we have a greater capability now than is being used. They could be used in Viet Nam and South America to train indigenous personnel.

STATEMENT: Colonel Kinard indicated that modest increases were planned for the Special Forces in the near future.

GENERAL DECKER: We have increased by 500 this year. If our additional requests are approved, we will increase this force considerably in the coming year.

QUESTION: In your Special Force considerations, have you established an R&D factor?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes. However, training is the most important aspect of our operation.

QUESTION: Do you have any other suggestions?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes, it seems that this type operation involves several agencies of the Government, State, CIA, and the DOD. Some coordinating agency would be helpful in drawing on all agencies in order to effectively prosecute the cold war - some permanent agency in one place.

QUESTION: Where should this agency be established?

GENERAL DECKER: Under the NSC or elsewhere but where the President would have direct access to it.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

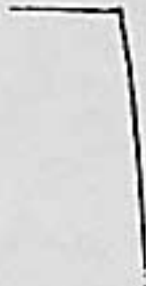
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INVESTIGATIVE

[REDACTED]



At this point

left

and Commander Mitchell briefed on the chronology of the ship movements based on the ship dispatches to and from the BLAGAR. Inasmuch as the script of Commander Mitchell's presentation was distributed to the members, no notes have been entered herein.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 11

Natl. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/98

By JK NARS, Date 6/23/98

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10 May 1961 - Thirteenth Meeting

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NAH. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/78
By JK NARS, Date 6/23/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

AT THE PENTAGON

THIRTEENTH MEETING

10 MAY 1961

PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

GENERAL WALTER BEDELL SMITH

COMMANDER MITCHELL

LT COLONEL TARWATER

IN TO A CENOTRONE

GENERAL SMITH

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: How can we in a democracy use all our assets effectively without having to completely reorganize the Government?

GENERAL SMITH: A democracy cannot wage war. When you go to war, you pass a law giving extraordinary powers to the President. The people of our country assume when the emergency is over, the rights and powers that were temporarily delegated to the Chief Executive will be returned to the states, counties and to the people.

STATEMENT: We often say that we are in a state of war at the present time.

GENERAL SMITH: Yes, sir, that is correct.

QUESTION: Are you suggesting that we should approximate the President's wartime powers?

GENERAL SMITH: No. However, the American people do not feel that they are at war at the present time, and consequently they are not willing to make the sacrifices necessary to wage war. When you are at war, cold war if you like, you must have an amoral agency which can operate secretly and which does not have to give press conferences. For example, on occasion Drew Pearson had almost verbatim texts of NSC meetings 48 hours after the meeting.

GENERAL SMITH: Those responsible for Government have to recognize the fact that once the Communists take power, there is never a change of party or control except by force.

STATEMENT: We can lose only once, but they can lose ten times and still recover.

GENERAL SMITH: Yes.

QUESTION: We have attempted to do things covertly, which really can't be done covertly, and yet the attempt to do so leads to operational restrictions which in the case of Cuba were very serious.

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GENERAL SMITH: I would take issue with the statement that they cannot be done covertly. They can be done covertly when the situation begins to be threatening enough so that you have to be immoral.

STATEMENT: I think we are now thinking of the Cuban operation which was the landing on a hostile shore of about 1,400 Cubans. I wonder if the attempt to keep the operation covert was a mistake?

GENERAL SMITH: I only know what the papers say, but covert operations can be done up to a certain size and we have handled some pretty large operations.

QUESTION: Should we have intelligence gathering in the same place that you have operations?

GENERAL SMITH: I think that so much publicity has been given to CIA that the covert work might have to be put under another roof.

QUESTION: Do you think you should take the covert operations from CIA?

GENERAL SMITH: It's time we take the bucket of slop and put another cover over it. If you're going to deal with people expert in these affairs, who have no regard for the individual or human life, you can't be quite as tough as they are, but you have to approach it in some manner. The Communists will continue nibbling around the world as long as they find it profitable or until we can find a way to stop it. We must face up to the Communist problem and take effective action.

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Natl. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/78
By JK NARS, Date 6/23/78

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16 May 1961 - Fifteenth Meeting

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Natl. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/78
By JL NARS, Date 6/23/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

AT THE PENTAGON

FIFTEENTH MEETING

16 MAY 1961


PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE


MR. KING

COMMANDER MITCHELL

LT COLONEL TARKWATER

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: Did you check the Navy plan?

[REDACTED]: Yes.

QUESTION: Were you satisfied with it?

[REDACTED]: For the operation at that time, yes, sir.

QUESTION: Did you check the training with regard to the ships?

[REDACTED]: No, sir, there was no way to check because these were merchant ships and LCIs which had never operated together. The plan was to bring them together at a port outside the country, brief them at the very last moment, and then send them on their way.

QUESTION: Were you generally satisfied with the personnel on the ships, the skippers and so on?

[REDACTED]: My only contact with them was at Puerto Cabezas during the four days that I worked with them personally.

QUESTION: How was their performance?

[REDACTED]: As far as merchant ship skippers and their enthusiasm, excellent. I was amazed and surprised that the operation went as smooth as it did, the manner in which they conducted themselves, arrived at the various rendezvous points and arrived at the objective area with a minimum of confusion was really commendable.

QUESTION: You mention seeing them off from Puerto Cabezas. Did you stay there?

[REDACTED]: No, sir, we returned to Washington.

QUESTION: Did you have any responsibility for the Naval aspects of the operation?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir, I was the Naval advisor.

QUESTION: Would you give us your impression of the actual execution of the Naval side of the operation?

[REDACTED]: The execution went off extremely well.

QUESTION: That comment applies to the landing in the objective area?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir. From the little information we have received on the landing, everything started off on schedule as far as the reconnaissance of the beach and the landing of the troops.

QUESTION: What about the unloading plan at Red Beach? How did they expect to get their equipment ashore?

[REDACTED]: They had some small craft.

QUESTION: I have a conflicting impression. One time I got the impression that they expected to use the ships' boats and then at other times I got the impression they contemplated using LCUs?

[REDACTED]: No, sir, not unless time permitted sending the LCUs up there. The main unloading was supposed to take place at Blue Beach. At Red Beach they were only supposed to offload their troops and the personal equipment that went in with the troops.

QUESTION: Did you ever make an estimate of how long it would take to unload the ships at Red Beach?

[REDACTED]: We estimated approximately four hours.

MR. DULLES: We have a report, I think, that the engines on six or seven of the aluminum boats didn't work. Do you know anything about that?

[REDACTED]: No. When they were put aboard ship they had been completely tested.

QUESTION: The reports from the survivors say that all the boats but one broke down, the engines didn't work, the mechanisms for getting them off the ships wouldn't work. Were those things tested?

[REDACTED]: Some of the ships had tested them.

QUESTION: Did you check those things?

[REDACTED]: No. These boats were put aboard at Puerto Cabezas and tested there.

QUESTION: Who tested the boats?

[REDACTED]: Army and Air Force personnel down there.

QUESTION: Were these Cubans or Americans?

[REDACTED] Americans.

STATEMENT: The problem may have been that the salt air caused the engines not to start because they hadn't been turned over during the trip.

[REDACTED]: Yes, but these were outboard engines and you can't turn them over unless they're in the water because they need the water for circulation.

QUESTION: Were you in the command post when the message came in from [REDACTED] stating that he was going to withdraw the ships because of the bombing?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Was that message ever answered?

[REDACTED]: When we received word that they were being bombed we told them to withdraw all the ships immediately. As I recall, that went out in the clear.

QUESTION: When did you learn that the ATLANTICO and the CARIBE had proceeded far to the south?

[REDACTED]: We sent the message for them all to clear out of there and to proceed to a designated point. We didn't receive any word from them, so we tried to check their positions. After a considerable period we received word that they had proceeded far to the south.

QUESTION: I wonder if that 200 miles could be accurate. Did they have time to go 200 miles and back?

COMMANDER MITCHELL: The CARIBE was 218 miles south. The ATLANTICO was about 105 miles south.

QUESTION: In checking over the naval portion of the plans did you have any misgivings about the difficulty of controlling this heterogeneous force at sea?

[REDACTED]: Very much so.

QUESTION: Did you make any comments?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir, we discussed it very thoroughly. One of the main problems that we discussed was the secrecy of the entire operation. I

[REDACTED]

don't know how much you've been informed on it, but this was one of the big obstacles of the entire operation.

QUESTION: What kind of comments or suggestions did you make?

[REDACTED]: Mostly they concerned how we were going to support these ships logistically. I was told, however, this was no real problem because the ships were going to sail from the States to Puerto Cabezas where the crews would be briefed and then they would depart for the objective area; and for the number of days that would be involved, this was quite adequate. Of course, after the ships arrived there, the operation was postponed, and before we knew it some ships had been at Puerto Cabezas almost three weeks. My first big problem was logistics, but again this was taken care of within the logistics department of the operation section. The other problem was, of course, planning how to get these ships to operate together, signals and communication. Again we had to simplify it to the bare minimum in order to sail the ships and have them arrive on schedule.

QUESTION: Was there any discussion of putting Americans on the freighters to provide better control?

[REDACTED]: We had discussed it, but this idea was thrown out on the basis there was to be no U.S. participation.

QUESTION: Thrown out on the general grounds that you couldn't use the Americans?

[REDACTED]: But this was not considered a real problem because the whole operation was to be accomplished in a quiet area of Cuba where they would have time to offload.

QUESTION: What was your impression of the ammunition situation at the end of the second day?

[REDACTED]: Very critical. As soon as we knew that two ships had been sunk we knew that the situation was going to be grave because the one ship at Blue Beach had the majority of ammunition and vehicles.

QUESTION: You'd say that everyone at the command post was very much impressed with the fact that they would need ammunition?

[REDACTED]: Very much so. We planned an airlift into that area that night and we also wanted to get the CARIBE and the BLAGAR and the BARBARA J. back into Blue Beach.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Did you realize that you just had the ATLANTICO to contend with because the CARIBE was so far south?

[REDACTED]: Yes, that's correct. The other solution was to load the LCUs with the packs from the BARBARA J. and BLAGAR.

QUESTION: Do you recall that about 11:00 o'clock that night they did transfer the ammunition and the packs to the LCUs?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Later on that was cancelled. Do you recall the circumstances?

[REDACTED]: As I recall, the reason it was cancelled was because they would have arrived at the beach too late to withdraw from the area by dawn.

QUESTION: That's what the record shows, but was that ample reason?

[REDACTED]: Yes. We were very worried about the air attacks.

QUESTION: But if you didn't get the ammunition in that night you would lose the beachhead. In retrospect, wouldn't you take the risk of putting those ships in there?

[REDACTED]: That's difficult to answer. We've argued it out before. It was feared the ships would be sunk and the men still wouldn't get their supplies.

QUESTION: Yes, but those same ships were under air attack on D-Day and most of them came out.

[REDACTED]: Yes, that's true.

QUESTION: Was there any real debate on this at the command post that night?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir, and, of course, one of the Cuban crews almost mutinied rather than go in on the second night.

QUESTION: Do you recall whether any special effort was made to get air cover?